

# CORRA

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# STRIKE!



## ON PATROL



IN THE STREETS  
OF BAGHDAD

PG. . . . 4



*New lead in Baghdad --pg.6*



*SECDEF visits 4th BCT --pg.10*





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**COVER PHOTO:** The Soldiers of Battery B, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Armored Division patrol the streets of South and Central Baghdad daily to provide security for the Iraqi people and combat terrorist activity.  
(Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brent Williams)



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# COBRA<sup>6</sup> on POINT

During the past month the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the 4th Brigade Combat Team have been performing superbly, facing the challenges and dangers of central Baghdad with courage and determination. I could not be more proud of our men and women who I have watched grow to become our nation's heroes.

We could not do this without our families' courage, determination and unwavering resolve from the home front. Our families continue to provide the same steadfast and loyal support that gives strength to their Soldiers at the front line in this war on terrorism. Thank you for all you are doing.

We have made significant progress in the past month, neutralizing the terrorists and building capabilities in the Iraqi Security Forces and this new democracy. This week the first constitutionally elected government of Iraq took office. Iraqi Security Forces have been increasing in capacity

and have assumed more responsibility throughout Baghdad. Soon the Iraqi police and civil authorities will completely control portions of the city.

Despite several attempts to incite a self-sustaining civil war by targeting civilians, the terrorists are losing ground. In spite of the terrorists' best efforts, the Iraqi government has formed and the Iraqi Security Forces have taken on the leading role in most of Baghdad. Together with the ISF, our units have the initiative and are producing significant results. For the past three weeks we have seen a decline in the number of terrorist attacks in our area. This is a significant reversal of the trend of increased



Col. Michael F. Beech

violence we've experienced ever since the Samara Mosque bombing a few months ago.

Our newest arrivals to the brigade, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry, have become an invaluable member of the team and critical to our successes. For these reasons, I am very optimistic for the future. Yet this war is not over and Baghdad is still a very dangerous place. All of us, here, know that much remains to be done. And for those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice we will not falter, we will always place the mission first, we will never accept defeat, and we will never quit.

*COBRA 6 OUT!!*

## F\*R\*O\*M THE F\*R\*O\*N\*T



Command Sgt. John E. Moody, Jr.

Recently, while out and about, I asked a Soldier what I should write about this month in the *Cobra Strike!* His reply: "Talk about our mission and purpose here. ... Some of us wonder if what we are doing matters."

That caused me to reflect on my days as a private, when all I knew was to do as my sergeant told me to do, and that was enough. Didn't quite understand, or care, where

what I did *fell* in the big scheme of things. I just knew to listen to my sergeant and do what I was told.

This rule of thumb still applies today – in the course of doing what you're told on a daily basis you may wonder if what you do matters in the big scheme of things.

I can ensure you that the answer is yes!

The mission that we perform here involves everyone, and it wouldn't be successful without everyone doing his or her part. The Soldier who rolls out the gate to patrol couldn't do that without the fuelers and the mechanics. The injured Soldier's chances of survival would be minimal if not for the initial care of the combat lifesaver and medical specialist. There would be no parts or equip-

ment without supply specialists or people in the Soldier Support Area making things happen. This is a team effort, and everybody's job is important.

Everyone here on this Brigade Combat Team is contributing to the success of this mission which includes the following:

1. Train the Iraqi Army and the Police in central and southern Baghdad so they can become self-reliant and capable of conducting independent counter-insurgency operations.
2. Secure the International Zone so the newly seated government of Iraq can lead their citizens to a peaceful and society.
3. Assist in reconstruction efforts, which focus not only on war-damaged areas but also areas neglected for years by the former regime.
4. Conduct stability operations and support operations in support of the Iraqi Government. These operations range from humanitarian efforts in the towns and villages, to patrols and search/capture missions.

The commander has given us the mission and expects all of us to contribute to its success. The Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team are doing that superbly, and I ask you to continue.

Continue to stay focused in your life. Others are in jeopardy if you don't. There is no room for a lapse, because you weren't paying attention. Always maintain situational awareness in the FOB and outside the wire. Finally, if you're not sure of something ask your sergeant.

Stay Alert! Be Vigilant! Stay Focused!



# Motorized Rifle Company

## dismounts with the 4th Brigade Combat Team



**Sgt. Matthew Eldridge, sniper, Battery B, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery, uses an M1114 Up-Armored High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicle as cover while his squad moves forward to an enemy location. The squad reacted after receiving small-arms fire and a near-miss from a rocket propelled grenade.**

*Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Brent Williams*  
**Patrol the Streets**

Heavy armor-laden doors of the desert colored vehicles open to a neighborhood waking to the routines of a daily life.

Walking the streets of Baghdad, the dismounted riflemen of Battery B, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery conduct security patrols in the southern streets of Al Rasheed, looking to secure a piece of a promise, the promise of change.

The day starts like many for the field artillery battery serving as a motorized rifle company in the 1st Armored Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, currently attached and serving with the 4th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team, deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Conducting combat patrols

daily, the Soldiers support Troop A, 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry and its mission to secure South and Central Baghdad.

The artillery unit, specially trained to serve as a rifle company, hits the streets to meet with the local Iraqi people, gauge their security and welfare, and distribute care packages, said Sgt. 1st Class Deoraj Baldeo, platoon sergeant, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA.

"We can see it in their faces that they appreciate the Americans and what they are doing, actually walking the streets," said the 36-year old Baldeo. "When the people feel safer, they start coming out to the streets."

The platoon sergeant leads the patrol, stopping by neighborhood houses to talk with Iraqis.

The patrols are finding the snipers, the improvised

explosive devices, and the terrorists attacking the Iraqi people and coalition forces alike, said Baldeo.

Iraqi citizens reporting suspected illegal crimes and terrorist activities in their neighborhood helps the Soldiers to accomplish their mission, said the native of Boston, Mass.

"The more people we get involved out here, the better it is working," he explained. "The more that we do this the better it gets. The Iraqi police, the Iraqi Army—we are finding the bad guys."

### ***Assess the Situation***

The U.S. Army M1114 Up-Armored High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicles ride in the distance providing security for the Soldiers as they make their way through the city blocks, patrolling the streets, looking for anything out of sorts.

When the platoon sergeant

is on the ground, Sgt. Zachary Hudson, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA, takes command of the vehicles.

The 22-year old senior driver from Washington monitors the traffic on his radio and keeps the vehicles in line as the Soldiers in his squad move up the street.

The line of vehicles, each sporting gunners in armored plated turrets to provide over-watch, patrol behind the traveling Soldiers, making their way from house to house.

Some days, the Soldiers hand out cards with emergency contact numbers. Other days they distribute humanitarian aid and care packages from the vehicles to the people, said Hudson.

"Overall, I think that about 95 percent of the people who are out here, they are all with us," Hudson said. "The other 5% are just confused."

Security forces working in Baghdad will never get rid of the "bad guys" unless they have the support of the Iraqi people, he said.

"We can't get rid of the bad guys unless the other guy, the other people, help us out," Hudson said. "We've got to get help from everybody not just coalition forces. Until we get that cooperation—the Iraqis are not scared of being taken out by these quote 'bad guys,' we can't do anything. We can but it is going to take awhile."

### ***Contact with the Enemy***

The Soldiers mount up in the armored HMMWVs and move out, heading to the next neighborhood.

The formation moves slowly down a main route joining several side streets lined with houses and local vendors.

The patrol is on the move, close to calling it a day and returning to base, when the



enemy calls.

Small-arms fire erupts, ricocheting off the lead vehicle, as a rocket-propelled grenade thrusts past the trail HMMWV, exploding in the field beyond.

Taking fire is the biggest test of the unit's abilities, according to Pfc. Tyler McKinley, weapons data specialist, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA.

"We have to react to contact and the time between," said the 21-year old HMMWV driver from Sheridan, Wy. "React, keep your cool and stay focused; and when the stuff actually goes down, we have a plan."

"I don't like it," said Spc. Ca'an Mihalich, gunner, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA. "I don't know who likes to get shot at, but we were already past it. I couldn't see it, so I couldn't return fire."

The vehicles bounded to the enemy contact, and the rifle-

men engaged the site, dismounting from their vehicles and covering down behind their armored hulls.

One by one, the Iraqis fill the street.

The anti-Iraqi forces shoot at the Soldiers, but they terrorize the local citizens, said Mihalich, a native of Indio, Calif.

Members of his squad put their lives on the line for the Iraqi people, he said. They are trying to rid Baghdad of the terrorists.

"Everybody wants a decent life, and I know if I lived here I would want my kids to grow up in a safe neighborhood," he said.

The vehicles cordon the street as the Soldiers assess the situation.

The field artillery Soldiers have trained for this moment for at least six months prior to deploying to Iraq, said Spc. Willie Johnson, rifleman, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA.

The Soldiers approached the corner of the street littered with the 7.62mm casings ejected from automatic rifles and machine gun fire.

At this point instincts compounded by discipline and training take control of the Soldiers, he explained.

Being a Soldier is rough and scary at times, said Johnson, but when the pieces come together, something happens.

"We are doing our best over here," Johnson said. "We're going to make it home safe."

### *Return to Base*

The platoon sergeant uses an 18-year old Iraqi interpreter, who goes by the alias of "Cornwallis," affectionately nicknamed "Braveheart" by the Soldiers of Battery B.

With the help of the platoon sergeant, the Soldiers begin questioning the bystanders, looking for actionable intelligence on his attackers.

At first, many of the citizens will not speak about the inci-

dent. They are reluctant to talk about the terrorists for fear of their own safety.

"There is no way to tell the insurgents from anybody else," said Staff Sgt. Troy Hardwick, gunnery sergeant, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA, "and without intelligence from the Iraqi people, there is no way to get the terrorists."

The Soldiers continue to press the people for answers, until a young Iraqi man steps forward. He is willing to risk his life to explain to the platoon sergeant and his Soldiers what transpired.

The young man provides the Soldiers with a description of the terrorists and the vehicles they were driving. He wants to see the terrorists brought to justice.

"That's coming, and progress is a lot further along than what it was last year," said Hardwick, a native of Abilene, Texas. "It's just going to take time."

A veteran of 20 years duty in the U.S. Army, currently serving back-to-back tours in Iraq, Hardwick trains his Soldiers and teaches them to combat complacency. "Soldiers roll out on ten patrols in a row and nothing happens," he explained, "and they start to get use to nothing happening; and that is not good. If they lose their head, their reaction time is slower."

His Soldiers learn from each other, and they cross train on the different positions in the squad, said Hardwick.

"Everybody needs to know everybody's job, and it makes the team better," Hardwick explained.

The squad is a good crew, said Hardwick, and "every time they roll out they get better."



Sgt. 1st Class Deoraj Baldeo, platoon sergeant, Battery B, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery, questions Iraqis burning asphalt in a road off of Al Jihad neighborhood of in South Baghdad while Sgt. Matthew Eldridge, sniper, Btry. B, 4th Bn., 27th FA, provides overwatch. The Soldiers investigated the scene, suspecting the Iraqis of emplacing an Improvised Explosive Device in the street. Instead they discovered the Iraqis were repairing a stopped sewer line.



# IRAQ's POLICE Force: the new fight in Baghdad

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

The flat, white paint with blue trim covers a façade of a building pock-marked with the scars of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire.

The structure stands as an endearing symbol of the Iraqi Police's dedication and commitment to the citizens of the Al Dora and Al Bayaa Neighborhoods. Despite several nearly devastating attacks against the police station in South Baghdad, U.S. and Iraqi Forces have rebuilt the headquarters for the police forces sworn to protect and serve, fighting crime and terrorism in Baghdad.

U.S. Army Military Police, deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, work with the Iraqi Police Forces on a daily basis to support the most essential of services for the nation's capitol, law and justice.

The Soldiers of the 21st Military Police Company (Airborne), one of the three MP companies attached to the 4th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team, work with the Iraqi Police in Al Rasheed and Karradah Districts of Baghdad to bring together all the elements necessary to



**Al Dora/Al Bayaa Police Station operates in South Baghdad's Al Rasheed District primarily serving the residents of Al Dora and Al Bayaa Neighborhoods. The Iraqi Police Forces operating in Baghdad work tirelessly to combat criminal and terrorist activity in their area.**

run a successful police force, said Capt. Sally Gonzales, provost marshal, 4th BCT.

"We are providing oversight to push them to fix their own problems with their own mechanisms that are in place," she said.

There are many different goals that need to be met. The desired effect is to teach the Iraqi Police to coordinate with higher elements and work together, she said.

"The members of the Iraqi Police Services are demonstrating daily the ability to rapidly respond to terrorist and criminal activity," Gonzales said.

The progress is valuable to the Iraqi police force, which is fighting a faceless enemy in Baghdad, said Staff Sgt. Adam Gossner, squad leader, 21st MP Co.

The Iraqi Police, said Gossner, have, in the past, trained more like a para-military force than the conventional police officer.

"It's really hard for them to do like American policing, because they have to roll out in force. Otherwise, they are going to get killed," Gossner said.

U.S. Police Transition Teams continue to work with the police officers, training them in basic police techniques, like handcuffing and arresting procedures to better prepare the IPs for their conventional role, he said.

Gossner, a native of Appleton, Wis., is proud of the Soldiers he leads in the PSD and the work they have done with the Iraqi Police.



**Iraqi Police operating in Al Dora/Al Bayaa mulhallas, or neighborhoods, must operate like a para-military force to combat the mixture of crime and terrorism on the streets of South and Central Baghdad.**



**Al Dora/Al Bayaa Police Station after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated inside the parking lot in front of the police station in July 2003. During the next three years, anti-Iraqi forces attacked the station several times in efforts to eliminate the security in the region.**



Just a week ago, members of the team, most of them, on their second deployment, were working in the stations, training police officers to negotiate criminals, roadside bombs and an enemy killing Baghdad's citizens indiscriminately, he explained.

Traveling from station to station to check on the police force's progress, the Soldiers see first-hand what the Iraqi Police are up against.

Two years ago, Sgt. Gerald Gregory, personal security detail platoon leader, 21st MP Co., conducted sweeps and raids with the mechanized infantry's 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad and Fallujah.

"This year, we do a lot more administrative work than we are used to," Gregory said of his current role in OIF. "For example, last year I worked at an IP Station, and if we were to go out on patrol, the IPs followed behind.

"This year, we follow behind the IPs, and they basically handle everything. We just observe how they handle the situation," said the native of Jacksonville, Fla.

The U.S. MPs see a huge improvement in the Iraqi Police Force currently operating in Baghdad. So much, said Gregory, that, now, the primary responsibility for the military police company is to train key leadership in the training of Iraqi police officers to become more self-dependent.

The IPs are training hard to build upon their training, and need every bit of their confidence in their capabilities, said Spc. Michael Sward, driver, 21st MP Co., who, until recently was responsible for in-processing new police officers at the station in Al Dora.

"We are training them, building up their Tactics, Techniques and Procedures as far as what to look for; how

to conduct, set up, their patrols; what to do if they do find an IED.

"Call out their (Explosive Ordnance Disposal); work through their command and their channels of EOD, IPs and Iraqi Army, to try to get together and work as a unit, all together."

The recent spate of violence in South and West Baghdad, especially Rasheed's Al Dora Neighborhood is due to anti-Iraqi forces working to undermine the security in the city, said Sward, a 22-year old Soldier, who plans to make the U.S. Army a career.

"It looks like they are targeting more of the IPs than the U.S. Forces," Sward explained, standing amidst Iraqi police vehicles, many riddled with bullet holes in their doors and windshields. "They are trying to undermine the Iraqi people's confidence in the IPs."

Yet, the Iraqi Police are rising to the challenge, said the native of Lincoln County, Ga.

"They take their bumps and bruises just like we do, but they understand that they have a job to do. So they go straight back out, flood the area where they just got hit, try to get whoever did it. Make a presence to say, 'Hey we're not going to back down.'"

Because of this, Sward, like the other MPs in his platoon, believes the Iraqi Police are going to succeed in establishing law and order in Iraq.

"They've got heart. The Iraqi Police love their job," he said. The majority of them are fighting for their families, their communities, where they live. This is their home."



Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Mark Cheadle

**Iraqi Police officers hold a muster formation before beginning their day's duties in the Al Dora/Al Bayaa Neighborhoods in Baghdad's Al Rasheed District.**



# STRENGTH and COURAGE UNDER FIRE

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Jason Dangel

Soldiers define heroes by their actions, characterizing them by strength and courage. Heroes are unique individuals who challenge fate, risking life and limb for something or someone they believe to be greater than themselves.

The Soldiers of 10th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, operate in some of the more dangerous areas in central Baghdad, including Al Amarriya neighborhood, recently characterized by extreme sectarian violence.

The Soldiers of scout platoon have faced continuous terrorist activities and seen adversity.

For the Soldiers of this platoon, their platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Carey, is a hero.

During a recent mission in southern Baghdad, the 29-year-old Carey's platoon assisted some local police involved in a firefight with terrorists outside a mosque.

"We got a call from battalion headquarters to go to a mosque and determine why the Iraqi Police were firing on it," explained Greer, a native of Rock Hill, S.C.

"Upon arriving on the scene, our interpreter told us the message the mosque was putting out to the people was to fire on the IPs, and then two or three minutes later, the mosque put out another message to shoot at anybody with a weapon," he said.

The message continued to resound from the mosque as small-arms fire danced around the squad and its vehicles.

Carey determined the situation was serious and made the decision to move



**Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Carey, scout platoon sergeant, Troop A, 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division oversees a security while Soldiers deliver construction supplies to Iraqi locals in the Al Amarriya neighborhood in southern Baghdad. Carey was recently shot in the neck by an enemy combatant, but is now back on the streets leading his Soldiers.**

on the armed gunmen, instructing the Soldiers to take cover in their M1114 Up-Armored HMMWVs, said Greer.

"When we advanced on the mosque, a couple of terrorists that had weapons surrendered and said 'we are not your enemy,'" he explained. "Shortly after that, one insurgent engaged us from the roof of the mosque, so we shot back and killed him."

Greer said after the brief engagement with the combatants, the fighting stopped; but only minutes later, the Soldiers began receiving fire from the mosque and surrounding buildings in the neighborhood again.

Carey directed his Soldiers into position to make a direct assault to eliminate the threat targeting his men.

"The firing had stopped; we thought

it was pretty much over," Carey said. "We went back to talk to the IPs to try to get a clear picture why it all began, and at that time, we started receiving fire from the mosque again."

Carey led his troops back to the contact area, but they first had to clear a wire obstacle that was blocking their vehicles.

Carey, a native of Lee, Maine, was leading a small squad to remove the concertina wire when rounds from an enemy machine gun raked him and his Soldiers.

"The rounds landed in front of me, and I caught the jacket of one of them in my neck," Carey said.

The round hit and tore his throat protector before entering his neck. He credits the small snap-on throat guard



for saving his life.

"If it hadn't been for the throat protector, it would have gone a lot deeper and done a lot more damage," he said.

Even though Carey sustained a potentially life-threatening injury, his instincts remained that of a leader. He continued to provide support for his Soldiers and eliminated several enemy gunmen.

Carey, Greer and the rest of the hard-charging scouts from the platoon faced another test of courage when one of their sergeants was hit by sniper fire in Al Amarriya a few weeks later.

While providing security coverage for a civil affairs mission, the platoon came under attack, first by automatic machine gun fire and then sniper fire. Staff Sgt. Charles Reed, Jr. was hit by a round in the upper portion of his chest.

Once again, a Soldier's equipment prevented serious injury, this time his protective vest. The plates located inside the vest stopped the round – and certain death.

Spc. Michael Rajj immediately tend-



**Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Carey directs his Soldiers to provide security for operations in the streets of south Baghdad as Spc. Michael Rajj, cavalry scout, provides overwatch for his leader.**

ed to Reed, who was not seriously injured. Rajj and Greer quickly applied a dressing to the wound for their downed comrade.

Rajj, a native of the Sudan, said the platoon reacted purely based on their training. This is not the first, nor last,

time they expect to find themselves in this kind of situation.

"The enemy is always there," he explained. "(Soldiers) can be attacked at anytime, but the important thing is to stay focused on the mission."

The platoon faces new challenges every day, but the Soldiers take it in stride, Rajj said.

When describing the men of his platoon, Rajj said the Soldiers are more than just friends or comrades – they are family.

One thing remains certain for the Soldiers of 8th Sqdn., 10th Cav., they have a mission to do.

Sgt. Christopher Taylor, gunner, said that beside the physical injuries the platoon has endured, the hardest thing for the scouts to deal with is gaining the trust of the Iraqi people.

"It's frustrating sometimes," he continued, "but day-by-day, I think it's getting better out there. We can just keep doing the right thing and hope we're making a difference."

As the scouts carry on with their mission in southern Baghdad, Carey described his Rough Riders in four simple words: "My Soldiers are awesome."



**A turret gunner scans the neighborhood for any sign of enemy activity in the area. The Rough Riders of Troop A, 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry use the most modern and advanced equipment available in the U.S. Army to provide force protection for support units operating on the ground in the streets of Baghdad.**



# DEFENSE

## The Secretary of Defense Hon. Donald Rumsfeld visits with Soldiers of the Cobra Combat Team.

Story by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, visited Iraqi and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, making an impromptu appearance at the Iraqi army's Forward Operating Base Honor and MND-B's FOB Prosperity Wednesday.

The tour provided Rumsfeld an opportunity to observe the soldiers of the 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, as they trained on infantry tactics and first-aid procedures.

While visiting with Maj. Gen. J. D. Thurman, commanding general, MND-B, Rumsfeld also took advantage of an opportunity to observe U.S. forces training Iraqi soldiers.

"They are increasing in their capabilities every day. This is an exciting time to be here with the new permanent government of Iraq. They are making impressive progress," said Rumsfeld.

"It was monumental to have the Honorable Mr. Rumsfeld here today to observe our Iraqi partner brigade honing their battle skills and to meet and eat with the fine Soldiers of the 4th BCT," said Col. Michael Beech, commander, 4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Rumsfeld also took the time to visit with Soldiers from 4th BCT and to partake in a special luncheon at the King Cobra Dinning Facility at FOB Prosperity.

Command Sgt. Maj. John Moody, Jr., 4th BCT, hosted the luncheon for the brigade, allowing each of the battalions to select Soldiers to attend the special occasion.

"It is good for the Soldiers to see someone from Washington come down to show them that they appreciate what we do on a day-to-day basis here in Iraq," Moody said.



Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Mark Cheadle

**The Secretary of Defense Hon. Donald H. Rumsfeld met with Brig. Gen. Mohammed Wassif, commander, 5th Brigade, 6th Division at the Iraqi Army's Forward Operating Base Honor located in Baghdad's International Zone. Rumsfeld also observed Iraqi Army training and met with Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers responsible for training Iraqi Security Forces.**

Looking around the room, the command sergeant major from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., stood aside from the crowded dining facility, taking stock in the smiles on his Soldiers' faces.

"It means a lot to me too because I care about how the Soldiers feel," he said. "At my level, my responsibility, I already know the importance of what we do. ... if it makes the Soldiers feel better, then I am happy."

Upon finishing his lunch with the Soldiers, who serve in south and central Baghdad, the Secretary of Defense energetically made his way from table to table, joining the variety of Soldiers, shaking their hands, posing for photographs and listening to their concerns. This time, he would ask the questions.

"How are you? Where are you from? What do you do?" he individually asked the more than 60 Soldiers, who joined him for lunch.

"It was interesting, very interesting,"

said Pfc. Allah Johnson, a fuel specialist with Company C, 704th Support Battalion, a 22-year old Detroit native. "I got a chance to see someone that you don't usually see as a Soldier because we are out here doing our job."

For 1st Lt. Casey Newell, platoon leader, Company A, 704th Spt. Bn., having the Secretary of Defense visit was an incredible boost to morale.

"It's important to know that the people who are making the policies stand behind what they are trying to do – to know that they are pushing through with us, that they support us," said Newell, a graduate of Illinois State University.

Newell said that a visit from a dignitary like Rumsfeld reminds the Soldiers that they are all fighting for the same cause.

"It's nice to know that the leadership is behind us," he said.



# GATORS RUN the Route in Baghdad

Story and photo by Pfc. Jason Dangel

Improvised-explosive devices remain a significant threat to military personnel and civilians in Iraq, and according to recent statistics from the Department of Defense, more attacks are being directed towards innocent Iraqi civilians than ever before.

In an effort to mitigate these threats and further safeguard civilians and military personnel, Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, cleared major travel routes of garbage and debris to deny terrorists hiding places for roadside-bombs.

Operation Stallion Run, a nine-day clearing mission headed by the 2nd Bn., 6th Inf. Reg., was conducted alongside Soldiers from the 62nd Engineer Battalion, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and Iraqi Security Forces, said Capt. Joseph Hammond, fires support officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 6th Inf. Reg..

"Basically, our mission was to move all the loose concrete and debris as well as some of the trash that has built up over time along the roads," Hammond explained.

"The reason this is so important is because the terrorists have been emplacing IEDs in the loose concrete and have been striking the local Iraqi populace, Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. convoys," he continued. "So what we're trying to do is take away areas they use to hide these IEDs."

Hammond acknowledged the great risks posed by the roadside bombs and explained that the successful completion of Operation Stallion Run will not only create safer traveling conditions for people on the roads, it will also help clean up the area and make conditions more favorable for people living in south and central Baghdad.

"Once this mission is completed, the ability to travel safely will greatly increase for Iraqi civilians, and it will provide security for the local Iraqi populace and Iraqi Security Forces," he said.

The 62nd Eng. Bn., from Fort Bliss, Texas, led the clearing effort. They're currently the only "combat-heavy" engineer battalion working in Baghdad.

Co. B is equipped with an arsenal of heavy machinery, to include combat earthmovers, bulldozers, heavy excavators and armored dump trucks.



**Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armor Division, secure a route clean-up mission with Soldiers from the 62nd Engineer Battalion along a highway in southern Baghdad.**

Security elements ensuring the engineers' safety included the scout platoon from 2nd Bn., 6th Inf. Reg.; heavy combat power from Company E, 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.; and patrols provided by 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, also operationally attached to the 4th BCT.

Iraqi Security Forces from the 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and Iraqi National Police also played a part in the mission and were in charge of various checkpoints around the clean-up sites.

Co. B was in charge of clearing approximately ten miles of road, which will ultimately make driving conditions safe for commuters on the heavily traveled highways in southern Baghdad, said 1st Lt. Bryan Musgrove, platoon leader.

Each day, under limited visibility, Co. B Soldiers cleared a predetermined area of road and completed the project over the course of nine days, Musgrove said.

"We were mandated by 2nd Bn., 6th Inf. Reg., to eliminate as much of the IED threat as possible," Musgrove explained. "So, what that entailed is any place where the enemy could possibly hide an IED was cleared from the roadsides and disposed of properly."

Musgrove said bushes, trash, concrete blocks and/or barriers were the focus for the clearance mission.

Despite the challenges that may lie ahead, Musgrove said the mission serves a two-fold purpose: to ensure the safety of traffic and clean up the roads for the Iraqi people.



# SPOT REPORT

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani addresses standing members of the Iraqi National Parliament during an acceptance speech Saturday. Talabani was re-elected president by the Iraqi National Parliament's Council of Representatives April 22. Also chosen to lead the nation's new-found government is the speaker of the COR Mahmoud al-Mashadani, and Khalid al-Attiya and Aref Tayfour as his deputies.



U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams



U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

Spc. Ca'an Mihalich, gunner, Battery B, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery provides overwatch from the turret of his M1114 Up-Armored High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicle as riflemen from his squad dismount into the streets of South Iraq.



U.S. Army Photo by Pfc. Jason Dangel

Sgt. Kimberly McGee, supply non-commissioned officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division receives a baptism during Easter Sunday Services at the Forward Operating Base Prosperity Chapel April 16.



U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Walker, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division presides over a 4th STB Noncommissioned Officer Induction Ceremony as Sgt. Kyle Hood, light wheel mechanic, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th STB signs The Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer May 6.



U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

The 4th Brigade Combat Team Commander Col. Michael Beech awards Spc. Brian Meserve, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, the Army Commendation Medal with Valor Device for killing enemy combatants. The 4BCT Commander awarded Soldiers of 8th Sqdn., 10th Cav. ARCOMs for meritorious actions in the face of the enemy.